

ahead 4 and 5 years, or even 10, and say, oh, you are going to have a surplus forever, that that is gospel truth. These economists tend to disagree all of the time. We have to be careful that we do not overestimate the projected surplus, be careful in how much money we think we will have. Then, once we have that money, we have to allocate at least a third of it to reducing the national debt so we do not have to collect all these taxes to pay interest on old debts which previous generations have incurred.

Second, we have to make sure we invest enough in Social Security and Medicare so that these systems will not go bankrupt. Mr. President, 40 million-plus Americans depend on these systems to sustain them, and Social Security payments, to make sure they have quality health care—seniors and disabled Americans. If we have a surplus lets make sure we invest from our surplus into Social Security and Medicare for that purpose.

Finally, of course, I support a tax cut. The Democrats and Republicans both support tax cuts. My take on it may be a little different than that of some of my colleagues. I do not believe the tax cuts should go to the wealthiest people in America. I happen to think we ought to focus on struggling working families. I listen to the telephone calls coming into my office in Chicago and Springfield and Marion, IL. I can tell you right now with what families are struggling. They are struggling to pay heating bills. Families have seen a dramatic increase in their heating bills in the Midwest. They have seen a dramatic increase over the last several years in the costs of college education. They are facing ongoing increases in the costs of child care. Any working parent wants to leave that son or daughter in the hands of qualified people. Yet it becomes increasingly expensive for them to pay for day care.

I receive telephone calls and read letters where people say: Senator, I have reached a point where my family is doing well but my parent now is reaching a point where he—or she—needs more and more attention and care. We are glad to give it, but it is expensive. Can you help us with that?

When you are talking about long-term care, when you are talking about child care, when you are talking about the expenses to put someone through college or even the expenses of heating your home, the average working family is struggling to make ends meet. When we talk about a tax cut, let us focus on helping those families first. The wealthiest in America are doing OK. They will continue to do fine. They may have a tax cut but it should not be at the expense of working families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from New Mexico.

IMPROVING SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I rise first to speak about one of the critical pieces of education legislation that the Congress is scheduled to consider this year. I believe we have wide agreement, now, on the need to increase school accountability, with new systems that will put real teeth into improving school performance for all students, and school districts, and for each State.

I have spoken for several years, now, about the need to improve school accountability. I introduced school accountability legislation in 1999. President Bush has spoken frequently about it. His new Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, whom we confirmed on Saturday, has spoken about its importance.

I believe there is strong support from those colleagues, both Democrat and Republican, on the HELP committee. The provisions that we developed this last year to ensure accountability are included in S. 7, which Senator DASCHLE introduced yesterday.

In addition, I am introducing later today a bipartisan bill which contains those same accountability provisions. I am very pleased that my colleague and friend, Senator LUGAR from Indiana, has joined me as a cosponsor of that bill. This will be a bipartisan effort which will demonstrate the bipartisan nature of these proposals.

These accountability provisions demand results of all students so the existing achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, between poor and wealthier students, between limited English and English-speaking students, are eliminated and they are eliminated at the individual school level, at the school district level, and at the State level.

Mr. President, I do believe there is now widespread consensus on the need for rigorous school accountability in key areas that are addressed in this bill that Senator LUGAR and I are introducing.

The bill establishes aggressive performance objectives for all students that are linked to each school's standards and assessments. It directs resources to the students and objectives most in need. It provides for significant consequences for failure so that States and school districts must take full re-

sponsibility for turning around those schools that have chronically failed to adequately educate the students in the schools.

Our bill provides maximum flexibility for educators to develop strategies to meet the basic goals of school improvement, and it ensures that every class have a fully qualified teacher. The bill provides an expanded role for parents. Finally, the bill provides new funding for school improvement strategies that have been proven to work. These are strategies such as the Success for All Program, which Senator LUGAR and I strongly support.

I am very pleased that school accountability is finally getting the attention it deserves in Congress from both sides of the aisle. With widespread agreement now on the need for strong school accountability legislation—and sanctions for schools that do not live up to basic standards—I am very optimistic that this Congress can move quickly to develop a consensus package. I believe this bipartisan bill I referred to can serve as a starting point for working with the White House and with all colleagues on this vital area of meeting the needs of our schoolchildren.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, but I indicate I do want to speak as in morning business at some time after the majority leader speaks to pay tribute to our former colleague, Senator Cranston.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, point of clarification: Senator BINGAMAN was not suggesting that he would speak immediately after Senator LOTT; is that correct?

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, in deference to the other people who are here and waiting, I will certainly wait until they conclude their statements.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the majority leader.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Senator from New Mexico for offering to yield time earlier.

Mr. President, I ask that my time be taken from my leader time so it will not count against the time that was made available for this debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

EDUCATION

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, we have a new President of the United States who has proven in his own State of Texas and in his life—and with the encouragement of his wife—that he really cares about education and that he means it when he says we should leave no child behind.

We need an education system in America that is focused on one thing, and that is children learning. I am convinced he means that. I have had occasion to hear him talk about that in